

MD + Responds

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Office of Preparedness and Response

NEWS FROM THE MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL VOLUNTEER CORPS + Summer | Fall 2009

IN THIS ISSUE

Feature: H1N1 Flu Planning	1
Message from Mark Bailey	2
MPVC News	2+5
Education	3
Partners	3
Reminders	3
OP&R Info and Updates	4
MPVC Outreach	6



MISSION

The Maryland Professional Volunteer Corps consists of health care and community professionals ready to assist with disaster and emergency recovery during a declared emergency or disaster situation.

2009 H1N1 Influenza Planning for Maryland

WRITTEN BY CHAS EBY

Normally, cases of the flu decrease as the winter months change to spring. This past spring was different as novel H1N1 type A influenza ("swine flu") infected thousands of Americans. By mid-June, the World Health Organization had declared an international influenza pandemic. The 2009 H1N1 influenza viruses are still present in the community. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) is actively preparing for a reemergence of the virus this fall and winter, possibly with increased virulence. Recent predictions have called for up to 30,000 deaths in the U.S. due to 2009 H1N1 infections.

The current flu pandemic has tested and exercised DHMH plans and resources. Since the spring, we have worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to update the state pandemic influenza plan to better reflect our state's needs in any pandemic situation. The state of Maryland is preparing to promote measures to mitigate the spread of the virus throughout the community. These measures include: policies for screening employees upon arrival to work, liberal leave policies for sick employees and students, and shift-work policies. Using proper cough and sneeze etiquette, washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers help prevent the spread also.



DHMH is preparing for pharmaceutical-based interventions in order to quell the flu. The state has purchased over 575,000 courses of anti-viral medications such as Tamiflu® and Relenza®, proven effective treatments for 2009 H1N1 influenza. These courses are in addition to over 200,000 courses received from the federal government's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). DHMH, working in conjunction with the federal government, is planning a statewide mass vaccination campaign, likely to begin in mid-October. It will be a collaborative effort between state agencies, community vaccinators, pharmacies, and other healthcare organizations. Specific groups most susceptible to the virus may be targeted initially. DHMH expects adequate supplies to vaccinate all residents of Maryland by the end of the year.

One of the best ways to reduce the negative effects of any pandemic situation is to stay informed. Guidelines and recommendations are constantly changing and can be found on the CDC's website (cdc.gov). There is no guarantee that the virus will return this fall; however, we must prepare for any scenario in order to protect all state residents.

MESSAGE FROM MARK BAILEY

MARYLAND PROFESSIONAL
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

These are challenging but exciting times to be working in public health. We are all holding our collective breaths to see how the H1N1 virus may impact the international and national communities. Certainly it is hoped that it will have an impact similar to a "usual" influenza season and not evolve into a full-blown pandemic situation.

As members of a volunteer response organization, there is a good chance that your support may be solicited to assist with a variety of activities related to an influenza outbreak. This could include dispensing the seasonal influenza vaccine or the H1N1 vaccines. State planning is well underway to respond to the various scenarios that may occur. The MPVC is considered an important resource for planning purposes and it is hoped you will be able to assist if called upon.

The MPVC now has a significantly enhanced volunteer management system. As a volunteer, you will have access to your registration information via a protected web site. I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to review and update your contact and skill level information so that we are able to better gauge the resources within the ranks of the MPVC.

MPVC

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, *MDRESPONDS*

DHMH through the Office of Preparedness and Response (OP&R) recently purchased an enhanced volunteer management system entitled *MDResponds*. The system will be used as a resource for entities such as the MPVC, DHMH, hospitals, local MRC's and local health department emergency response staff and volunteers. The system is a product of Collaborative Fusion, Inc. and is called CORES™. CORES™ is web based and allows volunteers to register on line and update their contact and demographic information regularly via password protected access. Components include a "mission manager" that will track and manage a volunteer's deployment from beginning to end. This system is well tested and has been adopted by many of our neighboring states and other states throughout the country including Florida and Louisiana.

CORES™ ensures that Maryland meets Emergency System for the Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professional (ESAR-VHP) national standards. It provides for

ongoing and continuous access to individual volunteer licensing and credentialing agencies.

MPVC volunteers will be asked soon to register anew with CORES™ to ensure the program has the latest information relating to contact information, professional skills, training, and availability. Individual volunteer information is housed in a secure database with access limited to the volunteer and the volunteer program administrator for each volunteer or emergency response unit.

The registration process generally takes no more than 30 minutes.

CORES™ will provide for significant enhancements to MPVC volunteer management and the program's ability to communicate with volunteers. In the coming year additional response units and organization will be provided access to the system.

The URL will be: www.mdresponds.dhmh.maryland.gov

Look for news on the launch of this site this month.

MPVC IDENTIFICATION BADGES

For those of you that have not yet received your ID badges, your patience is appreciated. H1N1 has taken center stage these past few months and probably will throughout most of the fall and winter.

We have not forgotten you.



EDUCATION

MPVC VOLUNTEER TRAINING

The next MPVC volunteer training is scheduled for Thursday, October 8, 2009 at the BWI Westin Hotel. If you have not been trained or were trained many years ago and feel you need a refresher, please register early to ensure a slot for that day. Training has traditionally been a sellout and previous feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

The training notice and agenda is included in this newsletter.

There is no charge for the training but please register only if you are certain you will be able to attend; we appreciate that things come up at the last minute.

Thank you again for your commitment to the well-being of your fellow Maryland residents through your association with the MPVC.

MPVC TRAINING

Thursday, October 8, 2009

BWI Westin Hotel
1110 Old Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, MD 21090

8:00-8:45 Registration

8:45-12:00 Presentations

12:00-12:45 Lunch

12:45-4:45 Presentations

CEU credits are available through Howard Community College.

Register at: coned.howardcc.edu/business_and_workforce_development/customized_training/registrationform.html (note the underscores between "business", "and", "workforce" "development / customized", and "training") and select Disaster Readiness and Response Orientation and Training.

OUR PARTNERS



FEDERAL DEPLOYMENT TRAINING

The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) is conducting week-long training sessions to prepare local MRC volunteers to be federally deployable. The second and the latest training occurred this past May. The Office gathered a diverse group of responders from across the country for both sessions. Two classes of MRC volunteers with advanced training in emergency response have been certified.

The training consists of classroom sessions, conducted by a CDC representative with extensive response experience, and participation in a practical, full scale exercise. Representatives from Montgomery, Prince George's, Frederick, Harford and the DHMH MRC participated as victims this past May. The state of Maryland was represented in the first class by Sandra Hill, the Montgomery County Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator—congratulations Sandy! Sandy was very impressed with the training and came away feeling confident in her newly acquired skills.

The OCVMRC intends to conduct training twice a year going forward with slots available for 25 trainees. The OCVMRC is looking for participants representing various disciplines with diverse degrees of experience. As information becomes available for future training, it will be forwarded to you.

REMINDERS

PREPAREDNESS MONTH

September is Preparedness Month. This serves as a reminder to at least annually inventory your personal, family and community preparedness plans. In anticipation of a significant influenza season, it is all the more important to determine how well you might be able to adapt to not leaving the house for a week or more due to illness. Do you have sufficient food and supplies available to sustain a "shelter in place" due to illness? Will someone be available to care for your children or parents if you are not able to? Who can watch after your pets?



How will you adapt to a potential reduction in public services if influenza strikes the populace at large—if electricity needs to be rationed or phone access is limited? Are flashlights available and in working order? Do you have a battery operated or crank radio?

Certainly the web is an excellent source of information these days. Some of the better sites to visit for a readiness check or more information on the H1N1 or seasonal influenza include the CDC web site, or ready.gov and flu.gov.

ESSENCE

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), Office of Preparedness and Response, uses the Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics (ESSENCE) for the early detection of disease outbreaks and public health emergencies. ESSENCE is a web-based system that receives data from multiple sources, including data from hospital emergency department visits, over-the-counter medication sales, and poison control center call data.

Prior to 2009, 15 acute care hospitals in the National Capital Region and Baltimore Metro Region of the state reported emergency

department data to ESSENCE. In the last several months, DHMH has worked to incorporate additional hospitals into ESSENCE to enhance state biosurveillance capabilities. All acute care hospitals in Maryland have now been incorporated into ESSENCE. The expansion of ESSENCE to include all acute care hospitals creates a more robust system with geographic reach to all of Maryland.

In the spring, DHMH used ESSENCE to monitor influenza like illness for H1N1. DHMH continues to use ESSENCE to monitor influenza like illness activity for situational awareness and planning.

Local Community Updates

Local MRC units have been busy through this H1N1 incident. The volunteer centers in Montgomery, Prince George's and Howard County assisted with answering calls at call centers sponsored by their respective health departments.

BALTIMORE COUNTY MRC, COORDINATOR WAYNE NELSON

Most of our missions are military in nature as the Baltimore County MRC is comprised of Civilian Defense Force volunteers. In the last six months we've:

- Supported 4 Post-Deployment Health Reassessments for returning National Guard soldiers (Afghanistan and Iraq).
- Conducted 3 Periodic Health Assessments (annual for National Guard soldiers) involving over 1,000 soldiers.
- Served on the Adjutant General's Health Assessment committee, the Baltimore County Emergency Medical Task Force.
- Conducted a July call down exercise for Baltimore County Health Department.
- Participated in a planning focus group for Towson University's proposed Health Emergency Preparedness Graduate Certificate. Three of our members have been qualified as flight surgeons, and of course there was the Towson FTX operation STAT (over 500 participants). Over 30 members completed CERT training in August.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY MRC, SANDRA HILL, COORDINATOR

During the spring H1N1 outbreak the Montgomery County MRC helped to staff the Public Health Information Line and took over 900 calls on the first day. The MRC was in the Information Center for over a week with MRC volunteers working in shifts to help cover the 16 hour days.

On July 22, a joint volunteer recognition celebration at the University of Maryland Shady Grove Campus with CERT, Emergency Action Team, and the MRC was held. Three of our members were recognized and given personalized MRC vests and a certificate as gifts of appreciation.

The Montgomery County MRC is planning with both School Health and the DHHS to administer FluMist seasonal flu vaccine to 32,000 school children. This effort will take place from Sept. 23 to Oct. 22. Professional members are being trained to give the FluMist to DHHS employees, School Health substitute RN's, and MRC members. Almost 50 members have already volunteered to help.

With volunteer support, we are also establishing a "Speaker's Bureau" to deliver Plan 9 and Flu Prevention messages to neighborhood groups and PTA's.

MPVC RESPONDS

This past spring provided the MPVC another opportunity to respond to a public health event. H1N1 attracted much attention and had a significant impact on residents for several weeks. International, national, state and local health organizations were all involved in the attempt to minimize the impact of this new virus.

Here in Maryland, significant resources were mobilized to provide support to residents trying to protect themselves and their families from the H1N1 flu. One of the resources established was the H1N1/swine flu hotline. Residents and providers were given the opportunity to speak with clinical staff about their concerns relating to the swine flu. The MPVC was requested to provide nursing and mental health volunteers to assist with answering calls. Volunteers responded and worked alongside other DHMH staff in keeping residents up-to-date on developments relating to the flu and assuaging fears that were expressed. The volunteers fielded many questions relating to school closings, food consumption restrictions ("should I eat pork/swine products?"), travel restrictions and precautions ("should I cancel my travel plans to Mexico?"), symptoms, and generally how to protect themselves and their families and friends from contracting the flu.

Callers were extremely appreciative (and at times surprised) of being able to speak to a "live" person.

Initially, call center volunteers were provided nearly hourly updates as guidelines from the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control changed frequently. Hundreds of calls were answered the first few days

the phones were open. After schools reopened and the CDC began providing more consistent guidelines, the calls decreased.

The call center remained open for nearly 10 days and proved to be a very popular and valuable resource for state residents. Local health departments were also operating call centers and used local Medical Reserve Corps and others to answer phones.

As planning continues for the possibility that H1N1 could become a more significant public health issue, call centers are again being considered as an important resource for Maryland residents.

Thank you to the MPVC volunteers that responded and for a job well done.

NEW FACE

The Office of Preparedness and Response would like to welcome Jason Holderness on board as an MPVC program specialist. Jason brings years of volunteer management and other valuable skills to the job, including proficiency in database management. He also completed a Master's program in Homeland Security at University of Maryland University College. Jason has already made significant contributions to the program. You will have a chance to meet him at a future training and meetings, please welcome him when you see him.



We hope you appreciate the look of the newsletter. Titled *MD+Responds* is consistent with the name of the newly acquired and soon to be implemented volunteer management system. As always, feedback on content and look is always appreciated. Please send comments to mpvc@dnhm.state.md.us.



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MPVC OUTREACH

RECRUITMENT

AS VOLUNTEER REQUESTS AND NEEDS SHOW NO SIGNS OF

ABATING, MPVC staff continue recruitment efforts and are available to present at professional association meetings or set up a recruitment booth at professional conferences. Fall presentations are scheduled but certainly there are dates available.

Word of mouth is usually a very powerful recruitment tool. It would be great if you could talk up the MPVC with your professional colleagues. On-line registration will be available soon via the new web-based volunteer management system described in more detail in the *Volunteer Management System* article.

VOLUNTEER COUNTS	PROFESSION	VOLUNTEER NUMBERS
	Dentistry	108
	Professional Counselor	212
	Mortician	6
	Psychiatric Physician	25
	Veterinary	229
	Nursing	3069
	Pharmacists	534
	Pharmacy Technicians	62
	Psychiatric Nursing	34
	Social Worker	687
	Physician	653
	Psychologist	104
	Faith-Based	62
	Radiologic Technicians	5
	Respiratory Therapists	3
	Physician Assistants	16
	TOTAL	5809